EVERYBODY'S BODY.

BY EDWARD GARRETT,

Author of "The Occupations of a Retired Life," "John Winter: a Story of Harvests," "By Still Waters," "Not by Bread Alone," etc.

"For every question she asked, the girl she addressed asked two." *p.* 114.

CHAPTER III.

A DOMESTIC DILEMMA.

SOMEHOW, the pleasant interchange of neighbourly civilities with Mrs. Compton, and the subsequent revival of Sydney's tender little courtesies, coming to Minnie just when her heart was startled by the terrible possibilities of a "first quarrel," revived in the little woman all the innocent ambition and energies with which she had entered on her married life.

On the strength of trimming her flower vases, and showing "the girl" how to poach eggs for the little supper which was needed to supplement the couple's interrupted tea, Minnie went to bed in a state of excited household notability, and fired with a determination to carry out an advice the Misses Blythe had already given her more than once—*i.e.*, "to keep the girl well up to her work."

In the morning she jumped up the moment she awoke—this was a very novel proceeding! She bustled around; she reminded the tardy girl that "the proper hour for breakfast" was "half-past seven," and did not estimate the amount of self-control that young person exercised to restrain the retort that "whatever might be the proper time, half-past eight had been the real time, and the tea would ha' been nice an' cold, an' the toast rare an' tough, if she'd a kep' to the proper time any mornin' since she'd bin in the place."

She was quite resolved that Sydney should have "a real relish" to his breakfast. There seemed no reason why

"Mary Anne" should limit them to eggs indifferently boiled and fish badly fried. So, cookery book in hand, she proceeded to make an omelette, while the girl flounced about in a bad temper, deciding within herself that "if missus wanted them trumpery things, she'd have to get up and do 'em allays." Minnie spoiled two before she got one to her satisfaction, and came to the breakfast table quite flushed and tired, but elate with a sense of success and of domestic virtue.

Sydney paid pretty compliments to his wife's cookery. This increased Mary Anne's wrath—not, perhaps, wholly without reason. "What would they ha' said to me if I'd ha' wasted the stuff she threw away?" mused the girl. "But I'm to be blamed for not doing regular, cheap, an' along o' all my cleaning and washin' up, what she's to be praised for doing for once, and putting in all her time, and mercy knows how many eggs! It's a pity men don't have to depend on what their own wives can do for 'em. They'd soon find 'em out then."

And Mary Anne began to muse that she had once heard that any woman able and willing to scrub a floor, darn a stocking, or boil a potato, was little likely to miss finding "a home of her own" in a place they called "the North-West Territory." That description was quite satisfactory enough for Mary Anne. She never asked of what it was "north-west." The place was somewhere—a last refuge against being "put upon."

Minnie was so satisfied with her present prowess and her resolves for the future, that had she noticed any unusual gentleness and gravity in her husband's manner, she would have attributed them to his growing sense of her dignity and worth.

After he had taken his departure, she proceeded to set her house in order, with that thorough-going, uncompromising zeal common to reformers new to their task. It was wonderful to her how things could have fallen into such disorder and disaster in so short a time. Minnie instantly instituted the most approved methods of household management. The drawback of these sudden revolutions—in households as in politics—is that the zeal for reformation does not seize everybody at the same period, or on the same lines, so that their first result is generally—civil war!

It proved so to-day. Before noon Mary Anne had told her mistress "she had better suit herself" as soon as she could, and Minnie had expressed herself strongly on the subject of Mary Anne's laziness and inefficiency.

"She could easily do all the work herself, and do it well, if it was her place to do so," declared the young housekeeper. But though she had only done a very small share, she found herself glad enough to lie down awhile, as soon as she had partaken of the unattractive dinner which Mary Anne ungraciously set before her.

For the next few days she lived in a whirl. Mary Anne signified that she was "quite ready to go the minute missus was suited," and "missus," on her side, was equally anxious to vindicate her equal independence of Mary Anne. Were there not scores of girls advertised for in the newspapers, proving to her unsophisticated mind that there were plenty to be had? Did she not see them standing in groups, hanging about the doors of one or two registry offices in the neighbourhood? There must be certainly many who would be only too ready to pick up what Mary Anne was so foolishly throwing away.

But somehow poor Mrs. Harrison proved those days very hard. She found that there were many little things which Mary Anne had been accustomed to do which now she did no longer, while a look in Mary Anne's face warned her that if she was asked for them, she would hear that they were "no part of the work of a general servant, who can be ordered off anyhow."

There was nobody now who came out of the kitchen when the mistress's foot was heard descending the stairs, to tell her if her skirt were hanging awry, or to give a light brushing to her mantle, or a twitch to her bonnet, and above all, the flattering word that sent her out "in good conceit of herself!" There was nobody who had a cup of tea ready for her when she came in tired in the afternoon. In truth, Mrs. Harrison, in the first day of reformation, had locked up all the tea, and proceeded to dole it out; but though, after a day or two, that thrifty habit was relaxed, Mary Anne did not relent on her side. She had been "taught her place," and she chose to learn her lesson!

Then somehow, too, the servant market changed its aspect towards the young mistress. She put advertisements in one or two papers (how much money they cost!) and they did not bring a single reply. The groups in the registry offices did not look so large or so attractive when she approached them on business. For every question she asked, the girl she addressed asked two. "Was all the washing put out?" "Was she expected to clean the boots?" "Was beer money allowed?" interrogatories accompanied by a look which made Mrs. Harrison painfully aware that her gloves were growing shabby and her dress slightly faded. To keep up her self-respect, the silly little thing actually put on all her best clothes to go to those registry offices.

She had resolved not to take any servant who could not tender a year's "character." She started with the determination that this rule should be like the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. But it began to waver by the third day. When she started it the girls laughed in her face. When she asked why they had left their last situation, they said it was because they wanted a change!

Even her acquaintances, the Misses Blythe, seemed to take up a less sympathetic attitude. They were "sorry she was to part from Mary Anne." "Girls were not easily got now-a-days." "The general servant was nearly extinct." (The Misses Blythe kept two domestics, an aged woman and a workhouse girl.) They asked Mrs. Harrison what wages she gave—her youth and inexperience seemed to justify that frank curiosity. Then they shook their heads and said she must not expect too much for that money. They looked askance at her, and observed, poor dear, it was not to be expected she could know much about household management. That was Miss Olivia's speech, made excusingly. Miss Susannah said something more severe about "good mistresses making good servants—she never had any trouble in the matter herself."

"I declare," cried Minnie, one evening, sitting down by her husband, utterly fagged out, after a day spent in wandering about after proposed domestics, who proved to be already engaged by somebody else, or utterly undesirable, or totally unwilling—"I declare I think the best plan would be to get rid of our furniture, give up our house, and go into apartments. Papa and I never had all this worry. It is very fine, I daresay, to have one's own house, but if it involves all this—why, really——"

So we often talk in our discontented moments, regretting that or longing for this, and yet if our desires were suddenly granted many of us would be as much taken aback as Minnie was when Sydney readily rejoined—

"Do you really think so, wifie? It has been already

passing through my own mind. I think it might be the best plan for many reasons."

Then Minnie actually burst into tears. "That means that you are altogether disappointed in me, Sydney," she wailed; "you find that I am not what you expected I would be—that I can't do what you thought I could."

Sydney was utterly astonished. "Why, it was yourself who proposed the idea," he said, "or I'm sure I should not have mentioned it." His arm stole round her.

"You ought to have known I did not mean it," cried the bewildering little woman. "Give up my nice house, and all my pretty furniture, in which I take such a pride! I grow fonder of it every day. I think it would nearly kill me to part from it. It was cruel of you to say such a thing."

Sydney's arm slipped from her shoulder, and fell lifelessly on the sofa.

"No," said Minnie, "what I was really thinking—is not there such a thing as economy in the wrong place? Might it not be more thrifty to give a higher wage to a thoroughly good servant, who won't break the crockery nor waste in her cookery? A few pounds make such a difference, Miss Blythe says. I could easily save them at some other point, and even if not, I believe we should be gainers in the end."

There is nothing so foolish as wisdom out of its right place. This is why copy-book truisms are often so exasperating. There was no right economy in servants for such as Minnie Harrison. Her true thrift was to do without any!

Sydney sat silent for a moment. Then he said in a strange, muffled kind of a voice, "You hire your servants by the month, don't you, Minnie?"

"Oh, yes," Minnie answered, now feeling sure she had gained her point. "So if we did not find we were getting full satisfaction for our greater outlay, we could easily change again."

"Very well," her husband conceded. "Offer what you think will get you a really good article, Min. Poor little woman! Let's make ourselves comfortable while we can! A pound or two more or less won't matter much at the last!"

If Minnie Harrison had had more experience of life, she would have taken alarm at her husband's words and manner. But, alas! to those who have not passed through sad initiations, the carelessness of hopeful jollity is not to be distinguished from the recklessness of dire despair. Yet, by one simple sign may they generally be known apart. The happy man looks forward to greater happiness. It is when we feel to-day is better than yesterday that we trust to-morrow will be better still! Thus it is when the world is dreary and doleful, that it loses sight of immortality, and is content to drown its terrors in the feasting and dancing it thinks it can secure for itself. Therefore, whoever gives a pleasant thought, a new hope, or a sense of restfulness and assurance to his fellows, ministers to their faith; and whoever, by his actions, makes life seem hard, or bitter, or unjust, darkens, so far, the face of God towards his brother.

"You're a dear, good old darling," said the wife, "and do you know that when you want to give me a present—I'm not asking for one, mind, but next time you think about such a thing—you might make it a cheval glass. You see, I'm the only lady in the family, and it is not pleasant to have to depend on the servant to tell me whether my skirt sets straight, or if my jacket is right at the back. My aunt used to say that a cheval glass is as good as a lady's-maid."

"What is a cheval glass exactly?" asked Sydney, dubiously.

Minnie laughed. "Dear innocent old goose! It is a long swing looking-glass, like a toilet glass, only reaching to the floor, and so it reflects one's whole figure."

"Have you any idea of the price?" Sydney inquired.

"I think you could get one which would do for about three pounds," Minnie answered. "Remember, I don't ask you to go straight off and buy one—only to bear it in mind, some day, when some sort of little ship comes home, you know!"

"The sooner one gets what one wants, the better," said Sydney, "or else one may never get it at all."

"My only trouble now," said Minnie, "is that I don't like to go back to those registry offices, and own that I've been forced into offering higher wages."

"Well, think of some other direction in which you may look," advised Sydney. "I should think our neighbour Mrs. Compton might help you. And I say, Min, I suppose if a girl is hired for a situation, and only stays a month or two, for no fault of her own, you understand—but just because things don't exactly suit—I suppose it doesn't go much against her—doesn't hinder her from getting another place?"

"After all I've seen and heard during the last few days," said Minnie, "I can't imagine what can hinder a girl from getting a place, so long as she will take it, and can be supposed to be honest. But I'm sure if I get a nice girl, I shall be in no hurry to part from her."

"No, no," said Sydney, adding hastily, "only in case anything unforeseen should arise."

"Then she must take her chance like everybody else," observed Minnie, serenely. "If a girl does not stay long in a place, very likely she does have to take what comes next time—she may not at once get the very pick of the market. But she'll soon find her level! I see they don't consider us so much that we need to consider them so greatly! Besides, what is likely to happen? I can't imagine anything."

"Oh, one can imagine many things," said Sydney, in a somewhat artificial manner. "For instance, I might get the offer of a good appointment abroad."

"Then perhaps the servant might come with us," Minnie answered. "Servants are very difficult to get in many colonies."

"It seems to me that they are a very valuable and important part of the community anywhere, whom many of us may well envy!" said Sydney, with a strange emphasis.

Minnie laughed. "I can't bring myself to envy them," she said. "Rather, I am thankful I was not born to do that sort of work. Poor things! Perhaps I ought to have had more patience with Mary Anne. I might, if I'd known all I know now!"

"I suppose you would not think of asking her to stay on?" suggested Sydney.

Minnie replied stoutly, "No, certainly not. She would forget her place altogether. She would feel that she was the real mistress."

"Well, that really seems very near the truth," said Sydney.

"I don't think you ought to say that," reasoned his wife. "I know how things ought to be; Mary Anne does not. To give orders is the superior part of work."

"Ah, you know how things ought to be, but you scarcely know how they ought to be done, and what you would like is a servant who doesn't require much ordering about," observed Sydney.

"Now, Sydney dear, don't be determined to have the last word," said his wife. "I'll let you have it, of course. Only you are talking of what you know nothing about. You are the master of the house, darling, but the domestic

sphere is my sphere ; your province is to provide the cash. You wouldn't like me interfering there, would you, asking questions and making all kinds of remarks ? I am quite satisfied with your bringing home the money, and you are my dear, dear old hubby ! "

But the day of Mary Anne's departure was drawing so very near, and her place was so unsupplied, that Mrs. Harrison lost no time in taking her husband's hint about consulting Mrs. Compton.

" I must apologise for being the first to call," she said, as Mrs. Compton admitted her ; " but I have a special errand."

" I am very glad to see you," Mrs. Compton answered, leading the way into the little parlour. Such a strange little parlour it seemed to Minnie, who looked round with scarcely disguised curiosity. The floor was stained a dark colour, and was bare, except for a few rugs, the like of which Minnie had never seen. There were three or four rush-bottomed chairs, two or three easy-chairs in loose chintz covers, and a table covered with a plain brown blanket. There were shelves fitted up at each side of the fireplace, and these were painted black, and were filled with books, the highest crowned by a plaster cast. In the window, to catch the sunshine, stood a little stage crowded with flowers growing in pots, and the curtains (did one ever hear of such a thing ! thought Minnie) were of neither more nor less than coarse, unbleached calico, bordered at top and bottom with brightly coloured stripes of varying hue and width.

Mrs. Compton conducted her visitor to the easiest chair, and listened courteously to the tale of bafflement and failure which Minnie poured forth. A little real struggle and effort of our own makes us very sympathetic with the struggling and defeated, even though their trials may be utterly puerile and such as would be no trials to ourselves. Mrs. Compton, keeping no servant herself, could scarcely be very much distressed that her neighbour could not get a servant, but she could be sincerely sorry that this neighbour was so helpless and so weak as to be overburdened by what under all the circumstances was a mere grasshopper of a grievance !

" If you know of anybody who will come and help me," wailed Minnie, " I will give them anything in reason ; and I can't be very particular, for Mary Anne is going away the day after to-morrow, and I shall be left alone."

Mrs. Compton resolved to attempt the cure of the real misfortune—and she wisely began at the right end. She first appealed to the " independence " and " dignity " of the little butterfly before her by saying—

" Oh, but don't allow that to frighten you into accepting any sort of help. We are not so much at servants' mercy as we seem, unless we choose. And you are the last people who need succumb ! There are only you two in the house. Let Mary Anne go, and then manage for yourselves till you get somebody really nice and efficient. My mother used to say it was sometimes a blessing in disguise when servants, who had not been quite satisfactory, left one before the new girls came. It gave one a chance of seeing to the back of every drawer, and the bottom of every pot ! "

Then Mrs. Compton's mother had kept servants ! Minnie was not too absorbed to make this observation, and it, possibly, modified both the manner and the words of her reply. For she did not say as she would have done only yesterday, " That she had never been used to housework," but admitted rather humbly that she did not know much about housekeeping. Her mother had been dead for years, and she had lived in lodgings with her papa, and the landladies had managed everything.

" Then I should be inclined to take this as a splendid opportunity to learn," said Mrs. Compton, brightly. " There's no way of knowing housework or housekeeping aright except by going through it oneself. That teaches us what we ought to expect to be done, and what we ought not to expect."

Somehow, in the presence of this capable woman, whose mother had kept servants, yet who did her own work, and actually had a white apron on, as she sat in her parlour, Minnie did not feel ashamed to own her utter incapacity, as she would never have acknowledged it to the Misses Blythe, or even to Sydney.

" I don't believe one like you can even think how ignorant I am," she acknowledged ; " I did not know it myself till these last few days, when Mary Anne has been so disagreeable that I have tried to do what I could. I should have no dinner for Sydney except tinned meat and pastry-cook's tarts. I can make one or two fancy things, but I'm not sure that I could manage the potatoes ! If only I had somebody to show me about a few things."

Mrs. Compton smiled. " Managing the potatoes is a great art," she said, in an aside. " But let us consider. I've heard Mr. Pyper say that nobody need boast of being a self-taught man, because nobody anywhere learns anything except what he teaches himself. If you were in a kitchen with a good cook for a whole year, at the end you would only know what you had taught yourself, and you wouldn't really know that until you had the responsibility of doing it alone. It is responsibility which finds out what is in us. Sometimes, I think it actually puts something into us which was not there before ! The question is, how to get you a little guidance, without depriving you of the responsibility."

Mrs. Compton pondered, Minnie watching her wistfully.

" Just excuse me for a moment," said the hostess, rising, and leaving the room. She came back in a minute or two, bringing with her Mr. Pyper.

" I think I've got help for you, Mrs. Harrison," she said. " I thought I would consult Mr. Pyper, for he knows so many people of such various sorts."

" Well, my dear young lady," began the old gentleman, " most people would think I was going to make you a very queer offer. I know a poor old dame who is now almost blind, who in her day has been a thorough servant, and if you let her sit in your kitchen for a few days, and tell her what there is to do, she'll tell you how to do it. She wouldn't let you make a pudding without the cloth, I'll engage ! "

Minnie giggled. " It would be so queer ! " she said. " Nobody would have ever heard of such a thing."

" Ah, ma'am, when you're as old as I am, you'll find that life is often like a child's puzzle-picture : when you can't get the pattern right, it's only because you won't pick up some little trivial-looking bit, whose significance you don't find out unless you put it fairly in place ! If you sincerely want to learn how things are to be done, I'm ready to engage that old Mrs. Ruffle will suit you to a T."

" Well, I might try it for a day or two," Minnie conceded, partly through a vague instinct that these people with their genuine sympathy and prompt succour (such as it was) had better not be chilled off. " I can't be in a worse pickle than I am. Only I'm afraid Sydney won't like to think of my scrubbing floors and cleaning saucepans," she added, forgetting that she thereby inferred that Mrs. Compton had

"In his nest my birdie sleeps." *p.* 118.

an unregardful husband. "And how in the world am I to make such an engagement? What ought I to pay to this person?"

"Don't trouble about paying, my dear young lady," said Mr. Pyper. "Mrs. Ruffle is a friend of mine, and she'll like doing it. I know she's poor, and I know she's old, but there's some people that the older and poorer they are, the better pleased they be to find they can still be of some use to somebody! Mrs. Ruffle is one of that kind. It'll be like a visit to her, and like a word from God Himself. For she's always asking me for something to do, and it was only yesterday she said she could not understand why the Lord was keeping her in the world, as there didn't seem any object in it. Now, to-day, when I take her your message, she'll see her mistake."

When Minnie returned home that evening after a final prowl among the "registries" to see if she could not make Mrs. Ruffle's help superfluous, she found a cheval glass

standing in her bedroom. She smothered Sydney with kisses, while exhorting him to recollect that she had never asked him for such a thing, and all he said in reply was—

"Some day I may ask you to remember that while I could, I did what I could to please you."

He was not so much amused about Mrs. Ruffle as Minnie had thought he would be. Nor did he utter a protest against Minnie's roughening her hands, until she reminded him that such would be the case. So Minnie felt that men are rather disappointing creatures!

In the middle of the night, Minnie woke up with a start and a sob. Then she sat up in bed and laughed aloud—

"Oh, Sydney, such a miserable dream! I thought there was a public sale going on in the front parlour, and the nasty man knocked down my pretty tea service for one-and-sixpence! Now, I suppose some silly people would be superstitious over such a thing, but I know it all comes out of your horrid idea of our selling our furniture, and giving up housekeeping. I tell you what, Sydney, I am going to be such a housekeeper as never was!"

(*Continued on page* 129.)

FAST ASLEEP.

Oh, softly tread, for baby sleeps,
So quiet doth he lie!
The gloaming round his cradle creeps,
The stars come out on high;
The gentle dew of even weeps
O'er valley, glen, and hill,
But in his nest my birdie sleeps,
Safe sheltered, calm, and still.

My white dove to the Slumbershore
Hath softly flown afar,
The rosy little arms no more
Upheld to mother are;
His eyes like meadow-flow'rets bright
Are veilèd for awhile,
But tender sleep hath kissed to-night
His sweet lips to a smile.

And as I watch his cloudless brow,
The look of peace he wears,
What yearnings fill my spirit now!
What thoughts! what hopes and prayers!
O baby-lips too young to pray!
O blossom newly blown!
May the Good Shepherd list alway
My plea for thee, my own!

I know not where these dimpled feet
Adown life's path shall go,
I know not what his heart shall meet
Of sunshine or of woe;
But, oh, my Lord, my Hope, my Light,
Where'er his steps may roam,
Keep Thou my darling in Thy sight,
And be Thy love his home!

M. S. Haycraft.

SILENT TEACHERS.

In these days of advanced scholastic training, lectures, and exhibitions, we are apt to overlook the fact that there are silent forces at work educating our children, which will prove beneficial or harmful just in the proportion that we control and guide, or neglect them.

Earliest and foremost of these silent educators comes Nature, a teacher as wonderful as she is beautiful. The child who is from infancy familiar with the sweet fragrance of wild flowers, the varieties of blade and leaf, the haunts and habits of the many birds and insects in the woods, and the charms of grassy pool and stream, knows more of her than any town child can learn from book or diagram. Such an education does Longfellow beautifully describe for us in his familiar poem—

". . Nature, the old nurse, took
The child upon her knee,
Saying, 'Here is a story book
Thy Father has written for thee.

Come, wander with me,' she said,
'Into regions yet untrod,
And read what is still unread
In the manuscripts of God.'

And he wandered away and away,
With Nature, the dear old nurse,
Who sang to him night and day
The rhymes of the universe."

Unfortunately all children cannot thus be face to face with Dame Nature, but all the greater should be our endeavour to bring before them beautiful things in art and life. Let us point out to them formations of cloud, delicate tints in the sunset, contrasts in colour and shape; take them as often as we can to picture galleries, for children always love pictures, and may be very quickly taught to distinguish between what is really artistic and what is merely dexterous colouring.

Next among silent educators must we put the world of books—friends as well as teachers. Happy the mother whose children love books, though all mothers do not appreciate the blessing. There are some who, if they see the little daughter curled up in an arm-chair, lost for the time in a world of delightful adventures, or following the mishaps and distresses of some unfortunate historical character, are instantly convinced that such reading is a sign that sufficient work has not been provided for the little fingers. Let a girl busy herself with the most useless bit of fancy work, let her spend hours, weeks, often months, making something which could be bought for a few shillings, rather than waste time over a book which is not a "lesson book." It is such mistaken ideas which drive girls, and sometimes boys, to that most pernicious habit, reading "on the sly," snatching odd minutes, behind backs, which should be legitimately employed in some other pursuit. Some

parents go to the other extreme, and think because a child is reading it is safe. It may be quiet, but not necessarily safe, for books are silent companions, with power to mould and influence, doing more than living ones to form tastes, incite to modes of conduct, and impress opinions.

The wise plan is to strike the happy mean. Let the children read and love their books, but judicially supervise their choice as you would that of living companions. Make it your aim to arouse in them an interest in the animal world, travels, poetry, heroism, and they will desire to go to the source from which you derived your information. It is a mistake to think children like only "story-books"—they usually prefer these because, having fewer long words, they can get on better with them; but let them find you ready to explain an allusion or a difficult expression, and they will not fight shy of "grown-up books," as they call anything beyond fiction. They will enjoy heroic ballads, some parts of Wordsworth, Longfellow, Scott. The "Lady of the Lake" is an education in itself in literature, rhythm, and love of the beautiful to a child who possesses it, and can con it over and over again. Buckland's "Natural History" and Kingsley's "Water Babies" are choice friends for children, and only need to be known to be loved.

Many little people have early shown a fondness for English classics, notably little Sara Coleridge. Harriet Martineau tells us that, left alone one Sunday afternoon, too young to attend a second service with the rest of the family, she "found on the library table a dingy, untempting volume, strange to her, but which she found to be 'Paradise Lost.' She began to read, and was soon deeply interested in the adventures of the archangel. From that day until she was fourteen, she tells us, she lived in heart, mind, and soul in Milton. The songster of chaos, the historian of heaven's wars, had set the universe in motion for her."

Give your children good books, all you who have the care of children, and you will be aiding the silent teacher who is moulding them, whether you will or no. The borrowed book never makes the same impression that one possessed does. It is read at a gallop, hastily scanned that it may be hastily returned; whilst the book in which one has the joy of ownership is read more slowly and thoroughly, until it is "marked, learned, and inwardly digested."

We must not forget that potent influence swaying, to some extent, the minds and actions of all children, the "divinely-bestowed gift of imagination." There have been divines who have condemned this faculty in no measured terms, as "weird power," leading those who possess it into extravagances which they would be ashamed that their fellows should know, "forming and pursuing phantoms, building and pulling down castles in the air." We have come to-day to look upon neither of these pursuits as wholly condemnable. He or she who possesses the great art of "making believe" has an unfailing remedy against ennui and dulness—even more, an element of poetry and a sense of beauty which give broader views of life.

A recent writer, far from agreeing with the old idea, questions "whether it be not better to be the shabbiest of fools, and know the way up the little stair of imagination to the land of dreams, than the wisest of men, who sees nothing that eyes do not show, and feels nothing that hands do not touch." This bright spark of imagination is possessed by almost every child, and much of their happiness depends on the treatment this silent teacher receives from parents and friends. The young mind which can be happy and contented in companionship with the pure and exalted creations of its own fancy will never be troubled by inquisitive pryings into forbidden subjects. "Imagination is a sworn foe to curiosity," says George Macdonald. It gives those who know its delights too much to think about and too much to love. ISABEL SUART ROBSON.

PASTIME AND PENALTY.

BY L. E. TIDDEMAN.

"You surely do not intend to go out to-night, Leonard?"

"And, pray, why not, Alice? The child is no worse."

The young wife lifted her eyes—they were as serious as they were sweet—to her husband's face.

"No, I suppose not," she replied in an uncertain voice; "it is hard to say."

"And it is awfully dull for a man to stick at home, evening after evening," he continued, querulously.

She made no immediate rejoinder, and he wondered what thoughts were in her mind. Presently she turned to him somewhat timidly, as though she half feared that he would not grant her request.

"You will come upstairs and bid Baby 'good-bye,'" she said.

"I would as lief not, Alice; she is just as likely to cry, and ask me not to go out. There's no use in upsetting her."

"Just as you like."

She spoke a little coldly, and he glanced at her, prepared to cavil at her tone. But he did not do so. Perhaps he was struck with pity for her evident weariness. She had just returned from a long walk, undertaken in order to procure for her little one a much-coveted toy, not to be purchased in the immediate neighbourhood. There was a slight flush upon her cheeks, the long mantle she wore draped a graceful figure, her luxuriant hair waved over a fair, pure forehead. Though the child they still called Baby was already five years old, Alice Winthrop looked nearly as beautiful as on the day when her charms first imprisoned the heart of the man who stood beside her. Yet he did not yield so readily to her persuasions as he would then have done, but allowed her to go upstairs alone.

He remained for a few minutes arguing with himself. As he passed into the hall he heard his wife's footsteps. She ran downstairs hurriedly, and for lack of breath, her words came brokenly.

"Leonard, I really do think Baby is worse to-night," she said. "She cried when I told her you were going out. Couldn't you stay?"

His brow puckered in annoyance.

"You are fanciful, my dear," he retorted, "and remarkably unreasonable. I told you that I had made an appointment."

Her lip quivered, and she stood facing him, holding a

rose in her extended hand. He gazed at it in astonishment, not unmixed with embarrassment. Had she gone back to the old courting days, when it had been her pleasant duty to provide him with a button-hole?

"Well," he said awkwardly, and the monosyllable conveyed a question.

"I bought it for the child," she said, "she is so fond of flowers. But when she heard you were going out she would not have it. She said—would you like to hear what she said, Leonard?"

"Of course."

"She said, 'If daddy is going to a grand place, I would like him to wear my pretty flower in his button-hole.' Are you going to a grand place, Leonard?"

He made no reply, but fastened the rose in his coat and bade her good-night. His appointment was not so very momentous, it led him to a brilliantly-lighted music-hall, where his friend joined him; and when there he tried very hard to believe he was enjoying himself. Yet such was not the case: the foolish jests had lost their savour, and above the odour of smoke and spirits rose the delicate perfume of the flower in his coat. It seemed in its purity to enter a dumb protest against its garish surroundings. He glanced from it to the stage, and it occurred to him for the first time that there was nothing very ennobling about the performance he was witnessing, and which had appeared to him of sufficient importance to warrant his leaving an anxious wife and a sick child. He turned to his friend and whispered a few words of excuse, which were lost in the round of applause which greeted a comic song not too refined in nature. In the midst of this he rose hurriedly and hastened home.

"She stood facing him, holding a rose in her extended hand."

His heart beat fast as he let himself in with his latch-key, and he went upstairs very softly lest he should disturb the little invalid. How strangely quiet it was! Had Alice also fallen asleep, wearied by watching? He was ready to tell her that he would take her place to-morrow and give her the rest she so greatly needed. But he could not utter the words that rose to his lips. She knelt by the bedside silent and tearless, and when he entered raised her head and pointed with a trembling hand to a little rigid form. His terrified eyes rested there for an instant, and then fell upon a baby face which rivalled the pillow in whiteness.

The strong man trembled for weakness.

"Dead!" he gasped, "and I——"

She took up his broken words, and spoke, still with an unnatural calm—

"And you were not here, Leonard."

The foolish refrain of the worse than foolish song, to which he had been listening, rang in his ears, and drowned her saddened voice. Its tones did not reach him until she called him by name.

"Leonard," she said, "lay the rose she sent you on her breast; she was so fond of flowers, our little Baby. Oh, how beautiful she looks!"

In a dull, dazed way he unfastened the delicate blossom that now drooped upon its stalk, and a sob shook him as he did his wife's bidding.

"Kiss her and say good-night," whispered Alice; "you were not here, and she was asking for you. I soothed her all I could, but she *so* wanted you."

It seemed to him that he had now reached the climax of human misery. He stooped and pressed his lips to the icy forehead, and a lock of Baby's yellow hair brushed his cheek. At the same moment his wife laid her hand upon his shoulder, and looked into his eyes, seeking for comfort. Then a new life began for Leonard Winthrop, and the God who is so full of mercy led his feet into fresh paths, and watched over him that he should not stumble.

THE SUPPLIANTS.

THE full-page illustration is taken from one of the best paintings which Mr. Edwin Long's versatile brush has given us. It was exhibited at the Royal Academy of 1872, and the artist himself has thus described it: "'The Suppliants' was suggested by the writings of Pacheco, secretary to the Holy Inquisition of Spain in 1624, which are preserved in the archives of Simancas. It is the story of the intended expulsion of the gipsies in the reign of Philip III., a weak monarch, entirely under the influence of the priesthood, and especially of the Cardinal Gonzales. The gipsies in Spain have always been considered a very degraded race; they were at that time excommunicated, and consequently not allowed to enter a church. It is supposed that the edict of expulsion would have been carried out, as in the case of the Jews in the time of Ferdinand and Isabella, but for the timely deputation which the picture attempts to represent, when the King and the Cardinal were descending the steps of the Santa Annunciata in Valladolid, and for the compassionate intervention of the young Queen, who may be seen in the corridor above. The historical portraits were studied in the gallery at Madrid, and the gipsies were all painted from the probable descendants of the Suppliants themselves, living near Granada in 1871."

The Suppliants. [*From the Painting by Edwin Long, R.A.*

A LADY IN THE DAIRY.

BY A LADY.

I.

We had suffered from a succession of careless and incompetent dairy-maids for a number of years. So no wonder I was pleased and proud when my husband said one day, "How is it that your butter *never* seems bad? We used sometimes to have it good and sometimes—not; you seem never to fail."

As this question of butter-making has been lately raised in so many paths of life, I venture to give a true answer to it in the pages of The Mothers' Companion, hoping that it will show ladies what a *lady* can do in the dairy.

I was born and brought up in London. My education included a great many things, and ended, just before my marriage, in a course of artisan cooking. My diplomas in that and "First Aid to the Injured" hang before me as I write; also various other certificates—for swimming, etc., etc. If one day I can add a dairy "pass" to my list, I shall be happy.

Unfortunately, in my maiden days (ask not too curiously how long ago that may be), the management of farm stock, milking of cows, or making butter was not considered necessary, ladylike, or even *delicate*. So, when I settled down as the squire's lady on a little country property, I was sadly non-plussed. Cook I could train, but the dairy was in the hands of those who were completely my betters. Those patient, stately matrons of the bovine breed, who gazed so calmly at me out of their dark brown eyes, were enigmas of natural history. All the process of drawing milk from their soft, velvety bags, and making it into butter, was a mystery too deep for me to fathom. So, in a happy-go-lucky way, I left it all to my red-armed, buxom-faced dairy-maids.

Result: uncertain!

But a crisis came at last, and does not such a crisis *always* come at a most inconvenient moment?

Just after Cosy, our most valuable Alderney, had given us a beautiful new child, Dorothy Draggletail went off on a spree and—never returned.

The pails of frothy new milk were coming in as usual night and morning. Who was to take them from the cowboy's hands?

It was "none of her business," said cook, who had already besides quite enough to do. So somehow it *did* seem to be the duty of her London-trained mistress to manipulate it—somehow!

Milk will not "keep." So, clad in a cotton gown behold me, one bright May morning, in the clean, cool little dairy, with a row of shining pans, filled with thick, leathery cream on one hand; on the other, a new purchase, viz., one of Bradford's Patent Declivity Churns.

Problem: How to convert the one by aid of the other into our weekly supply of butter!

It all seems so easy to me now, looking back over the years, but I sympathise truly with the forlorn figure—and any other like her—who had to work out that problem. I *did* work it out, and, in the smallest space I can, I would like to give you the results thereof.

Now, before I go any further I must bear testimony to the cleanly, interesting, delightful pursuit this dairy work is. No lady need object to it on the score of dirt, difficulty, exertion, or time. A white apron tied over one's ordinary dress does away with any fear of harm—the difficulties are only initial ones, soon got over by an intelligent brain. The exertion is trifling. Three-quarters of an hour twice a week given to the actual churning. A daily inspection by eye and—*nose*, taking, perhaps, five minutes.

That is all!

Now to business. Our family is small, and we did not need a large supply of butter. So my first purchase (as already mentioned) was a "B. P. D. C.," able to turn out no more than six or seven pounds of butter at a time. It cost, as nearly as I remember, thirty-five shillings. It is a delightfully compact little affair of white wood, with a double dash, easily worked by the most delicate person. Next I bought a pair of "hands," or patters, one shilling and sixpence; an oak trough, five shillings and sixpence (a cheaper cedar bowl will do); a floating thermometer, one shilling and sixpence; and several glazed earthenware pans of various sizes.

The very day I thus invested I met another lady, who, in desperation, was also setting up as her own dairy-maid. Imagine my chagrin when she told me *her* churn cost only 7s. 6d., and would "bring" butter in fifteen minutes.

I have seen that churn. It lasted awhile, but now is not. It was earthenware, with an upright dash.

My friend had strong arms. I have not. That was the difference. *Her* churn met with an accident on the stone floor of her dairy (and all proper dairies have stone or tiled floors). That fracture cannot be mended. I will say no more! Others might have a happier experience with these—to give them their due—very easily cleaned and cheap churns.

Having chosen your utensils, the next thing is to have cream at the proper "ripeness." I separate mine after standing twelve hours, and leave it untouched to ripen for three or four days in the summer; for a week in the winter. The temperature I raise or lower until the thermometer registers 70°.

Raise it by scalding out the churn and standing the crock in boiling water. Lower it by doing ditto with cold water. Then, slowly at first, I begin to churn, regularly quickening the motion until a rush of buttermilk tells that crumbs of butter are appearing on the churn. Then, *at once*, I proceed to *slow*, and finish with three or four rocking motions of the dash to "gather" those yellow beads of soft substance.

A few minutes' rest after these sixteen minutes of manual labour. Then the buttermilk is poured off, cold water added, cover put on again, and a few quick turns of the handle given. This squeezes a few remaining drops of buttermilk out of the—by this time—solid block of butter, and leaves less work for hands and wrists—*wooden* hands, my readers, though real muscular wrists. I never yet touched the butter I make with my fingers, and herein, I think, lies one of the secrets of success.

Salt, very fine, very dry, very pure, about one ounce to one pound, is what I then add. Wash that out again in fresh spring water. Weigh, print, pat, and—the work is done!

The actual cleaning of utensils I never attempt. It requires stronger arms and backs than many ladies possess,

and is *better* done by those accustomed to such work. All the same, no "half scrub" of the churn, or "cat's lick and a promise" of the pans, will pass muster with the mistress. So, after years of work, my little Declivity is as white as the day it left Bradford's shop, and I have never needed to replace any article in my dairy.

There are many other things that may be added to our dairy outfit. But those I have mentioned are all that are really necessary.

There is one visitor that should be strictly barred out of our model dairy. No, I don't mean the cat. No well-fed feline would degrade herself by stealing from her mistress' domain—I mean "*chance*." Everything depends on perfect accuracy, scrupulous cleanliness, and strict punctuality. The cream must be churned at the right moment; the salt must be added in proper proportion; the scrub wielded with actual energy. Then the balls, shells, scrolls, pats, prints, and rolls of butter on your table will indeed merit every husband's praise, and be *always* very good.

OUR MOTHERS.

BLESSED is the man who has or has had a mother of whom he is not ashamed. Two of the saddest things in this world are—one, for a man to have a mother who is a good woman, and has been a good mother to him, but has not the social position to which he has risen, nor the culture that fits her to move in his position, of whom he is ungratefully and ignobly ashamed; the other, for a man to have a mother of whom, because of her vulgarity, or her immoral principles, or her vicious habits, he is constrained to be ashamed. The first of these men is to be despised, and the second is to be pitied; but both are to be commiserated. For there are no memories more unselfishly pleasant, none that are more touching and tender, none that more sacredly awaken feelings that lie too deep for tears, none that cast more of the glamour of poetry and romance over childhood, youth, and manhood, none that are a greater power for good in our lives, than those that cluster around our mothers.

And the best of it all is that, whether living or dead, our mothers improve with age. The child, the boy, the young man, who has a good mother, may or may not appreciate her; but, if he be the right kind of a man himself, as his own years are increased, with their ripened experiences the love, the tenderness, the patience, the unselfishness, the self-sacrificing devotion, the unwearied watchfulness and care of his mother—renewed it may be under his eyes in the mother-life of the mother of his own children—grow in his memories of her into something saint-like and almost divine. Thinking of her, his own blessed mother, it is easy for him to believe all that has ever been truthfully said and sung of the mother of Jesus.

Our mothers, mainly, make us what we are; so at least observation and heredity seem to say. It is rare to find a good man who has not had a good mother. It is still more rare to find a great man who has not had a great mother. Not that it is of no importance, or of small importance, to the child who or what his father may be; but if one or the other must be commonplace in mind, and colourless in character, it is safer for the child that it should be the father than the mother. But by mother-greatness is not so much meant strong-mindedness as strength of character—energy, principle, a strong will, a noble purpose, a heroic devotion to duty; those elements of character that make the mother the motive power, the driving wheel, the formative influence, the creative and ruling spirit of the home life. Where it does not exist it may not be missed; but where it does exist it is felt everywhere and in everything; and if the mother having it be taken away, is missed as one misses life itself. This "greatness" is compatible with a disposition the most retiring, and with shrinking modesty. In fact, at its best it is distinctively a home quality, that, from instinct and on principle, hides from the world's notoriety. So that some of the greatest of mothers are known only to their families and by their fruits.

Woman, perhaps from her natural disposition, and also from her domestic position, is more religious than man. Religion is a life to her. The influence of this upon the children in the family, from their birth to the day they go out of the family into the world, can be seen at once. They are what their mothers make them. If they are Christians, they owe it to their mothers. If they are Christians of distinction, they owe it to their mothers. If they are Christian ministers, they owe it to their mothers. Given a Christian mother of character, and earnest in her religion, and her children are in her hands almost as clay is in the hands of the potter—she may mould them into "vessels of honour" almost at her will.

The history of a family occurs to us, in which a mother of Christian spirit and character, and of modest and retiring disposition, ruled and disciplined her four boys, and brought them up to honourable manhood, three of them to preach the Gospel, and one of them to die for his country. It is said that, though she was one of the gentlest and quietest of women, and though they were strong-willed and naturally self-willed, not one of them, till they were men grown and had families of their own, thought of disobeying her commands. It is also said, that though she was lively and vivacious, loving a good joke and a hearty laugh, such was the power, consistency, and beauty of her Christian life, that her children knew, beyond the shadow of doubt, that all the riches, pleasures, and honours of the world were to her as the small dust of the balance, in comparison with her wishes and prayers that they might be Christians.

Here is food for reflection for ambitious Christian women and mothers. We are so old-fashioned as not to be able to see that a Christian woman and mother can have a more beautiful ideal, or a higher aim, or a nobler purpose, or a sublimer consecration, than to live out her life for her children after the manner of the Christian woman spoken of. It is a life of incalculable blessing to the world then, and goes on propagating its blessings indefinitely through the generations and the centuries; and it is a life honoured by the children inexpressibly, and by their children and children's children.

A CHAPTER ON COFFEE-MAKING.

THE French are noted for the perfection of their culinary skill. They are famous, especially, for the delicious preparations of their coffee. The fragrant "bowl" of this beverage, with a tiny, individual pitcher of hot boiled milk, as served at the French "Cafés" is indeed delightful.

The secret of the unsurpassed excellence of French coffee is that it is prepared by means of filtration, instead of boiling. To boil coffee is to rob it of the "triple extract" of its delicate aroma.

The French contrivance for filtration consists of a perforated porcelain funnel, which fits into a porcelain coffee-pot. A circular piece of filter-paper lines the funnel and is renewed at each coffee-making.

The desired amount of ground coffee (according to strength and quantity) is placed in the paper-lined funnel, upon which the boiling water is poured. The amber-coloured filtrate is as clear as possible, of delicious flavour, and full strength.

Many may consider this rather an elaborate method of preparing a drink which is in such frequent demand. A good substitute arrangement for filtration is a muslin bag sewn in a narrow perforated ring of heavy tin. This is a much simpler method of obtaining the same end, and is within the reach of all.

Procure a china coffee-pot—a tin pot should never be used for coffee—and have made a tin ring three-fourths of an inch deep to fit the top of the coffee-pot. The ring must have perforations one-half inch apart, by means of which the muslin bag is attached. Any tinman will make a ring of this description for a trifle.

The bag is made of medium-weight muslin, nicely rounded, and tapering towards the lower end. If the muslin be too heavy the filtration will be too slow; if too light it will be too quick, and the filtrate will not be so clear. The same bag must not be used too long. It takes but a few minutes to stitch a new one on to the ring.

The necessary quantity of ground coffee is put in the bag, and boiling water slowly poured over it. Coffee made in this manner fully equals in strength, flavour, and clearness that filtered through a porcelain funnel.

A mixture of Mocha and Java—the one for strength, the other for delicacy of aroma—makes the finest drink. Green coffee gives better satisfaction than the brown, because after being roasted it readily loses its delicate flavour. But enough to last a week should be roasted at one time.

A suggestion with regard to the water used: Fresh water should be taken and made to boil as quickly as possible, when it should immediately be poured over the ground coffee. There is a distinctive difference in the taste of water which has bubbled and spluttered for hours, and fresh, quickly-boiled water, though the difference is, perhaps, more marked in tea than in coffee.—*Anna Henrichs.*

ACROSS THE WHEAT.

BY MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

YOU ask me for the sweetest sound mine ears have ever heard?
A sweeter than the ripples' plash or trilling of a bird,
Than tapping of the raindrops upon the roof at night,
Than the sighing of the pine-trees on yonder mountain height;
And I tell you these are tender, yet never quite so sweet
As the murmur and the cadence of *the wind across the wheat.*

Have you watched the golden billows in a sunlit sea of grain,
Ere yet the reaper bound the sheaves to fill the creaking wain?
Have you thought how snow and tempest and the bitter winter cold
Were but the guardian angels the next year's bread to hold—
A precious thing, unharmèd by the turmoil of the sky,
Just waiting, growing, silently, until the storms went by?

Oh! have you lifted up your heart to Him who loves us all,
And listens, through the angel-songs, if but a sparrow fall?
And then, thus thinking of His hand, what symphony so sweet
As the music in the long refrain, *the wind across the wheat?*

It hath its dulcet echoes from many a lullaby,
Where the cradled babe is hushed 'neath the mother's loving eye.
It hath its heaven-promise, as sure as Heaven's throne,
That He who sent the manna will ever feed His own;
And, though an atom only, 'mid the countless hosts who share
The Maker's never-ceasing watch, the Father's deathless care,
Do you wonder when it sings me this, there's nothing half so sweet
Beneath the circling planets as *the wind across the wheat?*

FAIRY ROSES.

BY JENNIE CHAPPELL,

Author of "Her Saddest Blessing," "For Honour's Sake," etc.

"THIS, then, is your new home! We hope you will like it, and be very happy here."

"I thank you much."

The first speaker was a bright-faced girl of eighteen or thereabouts, blue-eyed and fair-haired; the other was a woman past the flower of her youth, whose swarthy countenance was lined with care, though her dark eyes shone softly behind rising tears.

"We think it a very pretty little lodge," continued the girl. "It is so old-fashioned and quaint, and father has had it thoroughly repaired for you. The garden, of course, is a wilderness, after so many years' neglect; but Hawkins shall come down one day soon, and put it in nice order—and I will send you some plants. You have brought your 'fairy' roses with you, I see."

"Ah, yes, I could not leave my roses behind," answered the older woman, with a smile that transformed her plain face. "I have had my—what you call my 'fairy' roses—ever since I was so small," indicating the height with her hand. "No one did so well with them as I, and ladies came from far and near to beg slips."

"That was in your old home, in France?"

"Yes, *chère mademoiselle*, in France."

The smile died out with these words, and the woman's tone grew sad. A short pause followed; then the girl bade a rather hasty "good-bye," and Marie Bourchier was left alone.

She did not go indoors at once, but dropping down upon an inviting-looking seat beneath the diamond-paned window, allowed her thoughts to glide into a reverie. The chaotic flower-beds that lay before her, weed-grown and tangled, the straggling fruit bushes vainly endeavouring to fulfil their mission by throwing out a few poor clusters of starved berries, seemed to her just then a sort of emblem of her own spoiled life. What "might have been" stared her in the face, and forgetting for a moment that her path, crooked though it looked, had been mapped out by One whose love was sure, whose wisdom could not err, Marie grew sad and almost bitter as she reviewed the past.

Why had she been so hardly dealt with? Why was she left, in her budding girlhood, with a helpless infant sister to care for, whose feeble health and constant demands upon her time deprived her of opportunities that were actually offered for obtaining the mental food for which her soul hungered? Why, later on, was her yearning woman-heart compelled to choose betwen the lover whose smile was the light of her life, and the wayward child to whose guardianship she was vowed? And why, most cruel of all, was it permitted that the pretty, petted Julie, who had been loved so tenderly, and for whom had been sacrificed so much, should desolate the hard-earned home of which she was the only joy? Julie—Julie—Julie, all through; Julie, with her great brown eyes and dimpling smile; Julie, with sylph-like form and winsome grace; Julie, the loved of

"She . . . allowed her thoughts to glide into a reverie."

many, the admired of all, had been the thwarting influence in her sister's whole career.

Yet Marie loved her still. Twelve years of separation, of weary searching in a foreign land, had not outworn the mother-like affection that had already borne so much. A wild and ill-judged scheme most people had deemed it when Marie Bourchier sold her thriving little farm, and set out to find her lost Julie; but a conviction was firmly rooted in the elder sister's mind that the handsome Englishman who had won her darling's heart would ere long cast it aside as a worthless thing—that Julie would be wandering lonely and friendless on a foreign shore, without means to return. She must needs go and seek her, for at home she could not rest. Thus it came about that with all her savings long since spent, Marie was thankful to enter the service of a benevolent fellow-countryman who had recently purchased an English estate, and accept the shelter of his gate-keeper's lodge.

Yes, she *was* thankful, both to God and to her new friends, and ere long cheerfulness born of faith and courage chased away her transient gloom. Marie was bright by nature, and brightened everything she touched. Soon her pretty cottage with its trim garden formed a refreshing oasis on the dusty London road, and her sparkling dark face framed in the spotless cap which she could never be persuaded to lay aside, smiled a ready greeting that cheered many a traveller on his way. Pinks and pansies, stocks and sweet-williams bloomed luxuriantly where weeds and brambles had so long held almost undisputed sway, but the fairy roses were ever the darlings of her care.

"Look there! Look at that *dear* little dollies' rose-tree!"

Marie was stooping, unobserved, behind her currant-bushes, and the childish, silvery voice seemed close to her ear. Raising herself, she saw two little faces, white and wistful, peering over her low fence.

The elder child, a fragile-looking girl of about nine years old, coloured shyly. "We were only looking at your nice flowers," she murmured. "Do you mind?"

"But no, surely," Marie answered, kindly. Old maid though she was, she possessed a mother's heart, and weakly little ones soon found a way to its warmest corner. "Are you strange about here, *mignonne?* I have not seen your face before?"

"We're at the Home over there—the Convalescent Home," the little thing replied. "We've been ill, all of us, but we're better now. Ain't those *de*-ar little roses!"

"Dollies' woses!" chimed in the other tiny girl.

"You shall have some," said Marie, stepping indoors for a knife; while the children looked at one another with shining eyes.

To the precious spray of miniature roses was added many another fragrant flower, till quite a generous bouquet was placed in the hand of the elder child. With the radiant looks which welcomed that gift dawned a fresh interest and a new era of loving service for Marie Bourchier.

Her garden was thenceforth cultivated with the express object of giving nosegays to the childish convalescents, whose faces—like drooping flowers themselves—so often came peeping in at her gate. More, she sent baskets of blossoms to decorate the wards of the Home, and the children as they left got into the way of always calling at the lodge for a bunch of buds to brighten their dingy London rooms. The kind-hearted Frenchwoman took pains to have something growing all the seasons round, that none might go empty away; and the work brought a zest and joy into her life which for years it had not known.

A twelvemonth passed away. Geraniums and fuchsias, sweet-peas and mignonette, bloomed again round the quaint old lodge, and little human blossoms came and went at the big grey house across the heath—that wonderful house where lilies turned to peonies, white roses to red.

There were many grand visitors to the Convalescent Home, for it was becoming known, and a fashionable health resort was not far away.

One afternoon a beautiful and elegantly-dressed lady visited the wards, accompanied by her two little girls. She admired the neatness and good order everywhere exhibited, and spoke kindly to the young inmates whom she met, in a gentle voice with a slightly foreign accent.

Passing through the dining-hall, her eye was suddenly arrested by the latest addition to its ornaments—a group of Marie Bourchier's fairy roses in a fancy pot.

"Ella, Lilian, see!" she cried, enthusiastically. "The roses—*les petites!* I have not seen such roses since I was a girl at home. Ah, me! what memories do they not recall!"

"What sweet, pretty darlings!" cried Ella; while soft-eyed Lilian, noting the pensive shadow that crossed her mother's face, whispered, pressing to her side—"Are they the tiny roses Aunt Marie used to grow?"

The lady squeezed her little daughter's hand, but for a few moments seemed unable to speak again.

"Can you tell me"—she said presently, addressing the matron—"where I could obtain a rose-tree similar to this? Is there in this neighbourhood a florist who might supply me?"

"I do not know of any florist," replied the matron. "But very likely the friend who sent us this little bush could let you have one. Madame Bourchier, at the lodge——"

"Madame Bourchier!" cried the visitor. "Marie? *Ce n'est pas possible!*"

* * * * *

The meeting was over—the amazement—the questioning, the tears and smiles—but not the joy. Julie, in all her beauty and grace, sat on a low stool at Marie's feet, her arms leaning in Marie's homespun lap, her great shining eyes gazing up into Marie's tremulous face.

"Ah, but I have sought *you*, my sister, my dear, good sister," Julie was saying earnestly, in the speech of her native land. "But you had gone away, and no one could tell me whither, save that you had crossed the sea. The good God has been merciful to me far beyond my deserts, and I knew it was because of your prayers. I am rich—rich in love as well as in money—and I wanted to share it all with you—to give you something in return for all you have given up for me. I wanted your pardon, Marie, for my cruel ungratefulness; the remembrance of my behaviour to you has embittered all my happiness. But you *do* forgive me now?"

Marie's answer was a close embrace, a long, silent kiss.

Fairy roses cluster now in every nook of the rich man's stately hall, but not more sweetly than of yore in the windows of the gate-keeper's lodge, or the porch of the tiny farm. Aunt Marie is the idol of her two little nieces, whom she loves as she loved their mother in the days gone by. One cot in that house of blessing among the heather is called "The Fairy Rose," and many a pallid human flower is transplanted thence to Julie Arnold's bounteous home, to gather health and bloom beneath Marie's tender care, for Marie's heart is satisfied in cherishing them all.

CURIOSITY.

In everyday life, questions have a large place, and can stand a good deal of classifying. A deep thinker has mentioned as one of the trials of nerve and character to be found in social converse, the need of "Courage to ask questions, courage to expose our ignorance." Very many people do not possess any of that courage, and are content to remain in ignorance of what would add to their knowledge or elucidate that which is not clear to their own minds rather than ask those wiser than themselves for instruction. This is ever a sign of conceit and a mediocre calibre of mind. The more people learn, the greater do they discover their ignorance to be; and the farther they advance in knowledge or art, the wider do horizons open out. And, as they add to their information, they discover that, however vast their stores of knowledge or artistic attainments be, there is much more to learn—more than the limits of human life can ever embrace; and so they have the true humility of large minds, and are willing to admit their need of instruction on this or that subject.

If many people had the courage frankly to ask questions and seek for information concerning those things of which they are ignorant, it would be a great gain to themselves. A writer of the present day notes the strange absence of all scientific curiosity observable in many women. He says, "Ladies see things of the greatest wonder and interest, working in their presence and for their service, without feeling impelled to make any inquiries into the manner of their working. I could mention very many curious instances of this, but I select one which seems typical. Many years ago I happened to be in a room filled with English ladies, most of whom were highly intelligent, and the conversation happened to turn upon a sailing boat which belonged to me. One of the ladies observed that sails were not of much use, since they could only be available to push the boat in the direction of the wind, a statement which all the other ladies received with approbation. Now, all these ladies had seen ships working under canvas against head winds, and they might have reflected that without that portion of the art of seamanship every vessel unprovided with steam would assuredly drift upon a lee shore; but it was not in the feminine nature to make a scientific observation of that kind."

In travelling, those who seek from their fellow-travellers and the natives generally to inform themselves as to the why and the wherefore of strange customs, manners, and the art and history of the places they pass through, will add to their stock of knowledge very considerably. Curious legends, items of folk lore, and bits of gossip not found in any book, can be learned from those who inhabit a country. Many a custom or observance in a foreign land which seems foolish, will cease to appear so when its origin is told you: often that harks back to some quaint story or legend that lives only in the traditions of the people.

Another writer (Professor Blackie), in writing of women, speaks thus of them concerning curiosity, but this not of a scientific kind: "The acuteness of the observant faculty in woman," says he, ". . . opens up the famous chapter of the curiosity of the sex which, from Bluebeard downwards, has been famous in story. I do not think this quality a vice in itself; quite the contrary, for the want of curiosity arising from apathy or dulness is always a vice, and not to be curious is simply to be indifferent. Like all other healthy instincts, it becomes a vice only when in excess, or when wandering out of its natural domain. To be curious about other people's matters is certainly an impertinence; but a woman having no engrossing occupation will readily find frequent occasion to make herself at home in her neighbour's business, and will as readily justify herself by asserting her right, and even duty, to employ liberally the sympathy which binds together every member of the human family."

However excellent may be this excuse for woman's weakness, it cannot be denied that idle curiosity is harmful, and a golden mean should be striven for between aimless inquisitiveness and apathy concerning the affairs of others. Many can bear severity better than indifference, and indeed carelessness of the lives and interests of others is a glaring fault, not to be excused by a profession of wishing to shun curiosity.

In family life it is not always so easy to hit the happy medium, but tact and consideration can do a good deal. Those who like to wrap themselves up in mystery, and shroud the most trivial affairs of their lives in a veil of secrecy, can often be shaken out of this very unpleasant habit by a little well-timed *badinage* and raillery. But here, again, a line should be drawn, and particularly in the case of the grown-up members of a family, a certain amount of independence of action should be permitted by the non-necessity of giving a detailed account of all they do, and their reticence should not always be considered an injury.

But idle curiosity is another matter, and that should be repressed. Children, for instance, should not be allowed the habit of asking questions, as they often do, for talking's sake. Children cannot be too much impressed with the fact that to ask curious questions is a sign of an ill-bred person. Never should they ask for whom one is in mourning, nor, excepting among their contemporaries, how old anyone is. Many people have a weakness on the latter subject, and for a child to ask a lady of uncertain age before others, or at any time, the pointed question, "How old are you?" is likely to rouse the inward wrath of the individual.

The amount of curiosity many people have concerning the incomes, ages, pursuits, and private affairs generally of their neighbours is amazing. People should be permitted to say for themselves as much about their concerns as they please, and once having let them take the initiative, you can manifest interest, and show that you care for their confidence. To seek to obtain information that they do not wish to give you is alike bad taste and wrong feeling. To indulge curiosity by listening to idle tales and conversation that can be characterised only as gossip—in the lower meaning of the word—is deteriorating to mind and heart. To investigate purposely the affairs of your neighbour is wrong, and one illegitimate weapon is chatting over those said concerns with your servants. The latter always take, sensibly or insensibly, their cue from their masters, and very soon know whether some item of news, some insinuation or innuendo, a surmise or a fact gossiped back by other servants, will be favourably received or not.

It is for the well-being of every house that such retailing of the affairs of others should be checked, and not encouraged, and at least if you cannot prevent your servants from following the bent of their tastes in their conversation with their fellows, you can stop all gossip being repeated to you.

L. E. Dobrée.

A SLIGHT change seems to be taking place in the matter of dress skirts. We see an effort is being made to introduce a skirt draped over the hips, which relieves the hard, straight lines of the plain gored skirt. One of the greatest novelties of the season is the double skirt, such as was worn about thirty years ago, the only difference being that now the upper skirt is longer than the under one, whereas then both were of equal length. Two materials are often used for these dresses. The sleeves and plastron are made to match the visible portion of the under skirt, while the body and the upper skirt are alike. It is not necessary, however, to make the whole of the under skirt of the material, it can be set on to the lining, but must be deep enough to avoid the lining being seen when the upper skirt gets out of place.

Fig. 30.

Another new style has a three-fold skirt, which consists of very broad flounces set on plain. Sometimes they go all round the skirt, while at others a stripe of contrast material or velvet is let in down the left side.

Many new designs are being shown in crimped zephyr, and also in the new crape cotton stuff. These materials are often employed for the skirt of the dress, while the long basque bodice is of cloth or cashmere.

Thin, transparent materials are made up with a tunic of silk or sateen. Corselet bodices are very much used this season, as well as separate corselet trimmings. The latter are generally made plain, and of contrasting stuff, and often have braces of the same material. Corselets are trimmed with all kinds of materials. Ruches are perhaps the prettiest, but plain bands of velvet or ribbon are much used. Thin materials are gathered or pleated. Sometimes the corselet trimming goes all round the figure, while at others it only ornaments the front of the bodice.

Fig. 30. Here we show a dress with corselet bodice. A tight-fitting lining is first cut and fitted. The upper part of this is covered with a contrast material, and below is the corselet, which is also sewn to the tight-fitting lining. A trimming of velvet is used where the corselet joins the body, and also where the body and skirt meet, while braces of the same go over each shoulder. Rows of velvet are also used to ornament the skirt and sleeve. This dress will take about six yards of double-width stuff, four and a half plain, and one and a half of fancy, for a girl of sixteen years.

Fig. 31.

Fig. 31. Here we show one of the somewhat quaint dresses so much in vogue just now for little girls. To some extent the children must be like their parents, hence we see the Watteau pleat employed on their dresses and mantles as well as on those for the older folk. In the present design we have a princess dress gathered with three runners at the waist, and also across the front of the bodice below the yoke. The Watteau pleat is put on separately, and can be cut in one with the collar at the back. The dress can be made with or without the jacket fronts. The yoke is made of lace or fancy material, and a small piece of the same is inserted under the pleat at the back. The puff sleeve is mounted on a sort of gauntlet cuff with gathers.

Figs. 32 and 33. Now we come to the mammas' dress, and show in our illustrations two new styles for dress skirts. One is slightly draped on the hips and has a full train at the back, while the other is laid in box-pleats at the sides and fronts, and has also a full train at the back.

Fig. 33. Fig. 32.

Fig. 32 can be made in fine striped beige, with velvet collar, cuffs, and waistband. The stuff is set on plain below the yoke, and the fulness is gathered to the centre with a few small pleats. The sleeve is less high on the shoulders than was worn a short time since, and is finished with a cuff of velvet.

Fig. 33 has the draped skirt before referred to, which is trimmed at the bottom with a beaded fringe, as is also the jacket bodice. The sleeve has a full puff at the top, and is tight-fitting below. A plastron of silk with bead trimming on either side is used to ornament the bodice.

Flat paper patterns of any of the dresses described in this article can be supplied, price 6½d. each, post free. Address, "M. C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, E.C.